

Request for Task Order under
NIH Information and Communications Services (ICS) Contract

RFTOP# 41 Title: Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarships Recruitment, Outreach, and Information Activities

A. POINT OF CONTACT NAME: Anthony Revenis

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Proposal Address:

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B. PROPOSED PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 1 year from date of award. NIH reserves the right to extend this performance by non-competitive modification.

C. PRICING METHOD: Cost Plus Fixed Fee, Incrementally Funded. OLSR estimates that this project will require fewer than 6,000 hours of service and that the ODCs should average about \$50,000.

D. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS: Technical and business proposals should be submitted by e-mail. Please enter in the subject line the following text, "RFTOP#41 – Proposal from (insert your firm's name)" A signed task order form will be requested from the successful offeror. Technical proposals should not exceed 20 pages in length.

E. RESPONSE DUE DATE: Monday, September 17, 2001, at 10:00 A.M. EDT

F. TASK DESCRIPTION:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The NIH Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarship administers the Undergraduate Scholarship Program (UGSP), three intramural loan repayment programs, and five extramural loan repayment programs (four of which are new and have been Congressionally mandated), as well as plans and conducts recruitment and outreach activities for other NIH intramural research training programs.

The loan repayment programs (LRPs) are competitive programs whose purpose is to attract researchers to the NIH, as well as retain researchers whose work is supported through NIH research grants or contracts by offering student loan repayment as an incentive. The intramural LRPs currently use Internet technology to disseminate information to potential applicants. In addition, the Loan Repayment Web Site supports a Management Information System (MIS) for the administration of the programs. The MIS includes data entry and reporting functions for the office's administrators, and data collection and dissemination for program participants, LRP coordinators, and participants' supervisors. In particular, the web-based MIS provides

participants with detailed information on the repayment status and scheduled payments for their qualifying student loans.

The UGSP is a competitive scholarship program for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are committed to careers in biomedical research. The UGSP uses Internet technology and World Wide Web sites for multiple purposes, including dissemination of program information to potential applicants; online applications; program administration which includes application evaluation; and information collection and dissemination for active program participants. The collection of application information has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarship also plans and carries out a number of recruitment and outreach initiatives in conjunction with national conferences or meetings. These initiatives are to increase the awareness of the NIH research and research training programs.

The goals for this task order are to: (1) enhance and maintain the LRPs Internet infrastructure for all eight loan repayment programs; (2) enhance and maintain the LRP-MIS, including modifications to capture and maintain data and information on the four new extramural loan repayment programs; (3) enhance and maintain the UGSP Internet infrastructure; (4) provide technical support in developing and deploying new Internet functions; (5) plan, manage execute, and evaluate OLRs recruitment and outreach activities to include meeting support, exhibit services, and graphics design; and (6) assess the effectiveness of the various critical and interrelated information and communication activities of the OLRs.

SERVICES NEEDED

General Requirements

The general scope of work is to provide information and communication services, including the design and implementation of Internet- and Web-based systems, HTML page creation, database design, and implementation, programming, plus maintenance for existing systems of this type and to plan and carry out recruitment and outreach activities for the NIH Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarship.

All work will take place at the contractor's facilities. OLRs' Web sites will be hosted on the contractor's servers. The contractor shall furnish the necessary labor, materials, supplies, equipment and services to perform the specific requirements described below. The contractor must have access to a full complement of experts needed to manage and execute each of the required services, including graphics specialists, exhibit specialists, meeting planners, as well as the following IT specialists:

Microcomputer/Web Specialist: Provides HTML page authoring and Web site maintenance. Converts existing documents to Web formats. May provide database design and implementation, as well as programming for online database systems. Meets with OLRs staff to determine requirements. Provides technical support and researches and recommends software and hardware

upgrades and additions. May provide training to OLRs staff in custom or commercial applications.

Systems Analyst: Consults with OLRs Director or other professional staff designated by the OLRs Director to identify requirements for OLRs programs, develops detailed specifications, and develops custom software applications and systems. Ensures quality by testing and refining software applications and documenting outcomes and processes. May train OLRs staff on new applications. Supervises programming staff, assigning programming activities, guiding and reviewing work, and evaluating performance.

Senior Systems Analyst: Performs the activities of Systems Analyst. Is responsible for analyzing and implementing very complex systems. Serves as Project Manager, monitoring resources and schedules and making changes as needed to achieve the objectives of the project. Provides resource and time estimates for new work.

Microcomputer Technical Specialist: Provides specialized hardware and/or software support for contractor and OLRs staff, including installation, configuration, and maintenance. May provide expertise in specific application areas, such as graphics, creation and layout for Web pages. Develops training material and trains staff on systems and applications.

Specific Requirements

(1) Enhance and Maintain the LRP Internet Infrastructure. The purpose of this task is to host, maintain, and enhance the LRP Web site (<http://lrp.info.nih.gov>) and related Internet infrastructure. Periodic updates will be needed in conjunction with the annual cycle of applications and renewals. The Web site may also be revised using elements of the UGSP site redesign (2).

(2) Enhance and Maintain the UGSP Internet Infrastructure. The purpose of this task is to host, maintain, and enhance the UGSP web site (<http://ugsp.info.nih.gov>) and related Internet infrastructure. The site includes a public area for attracting and supporting applicants, a restricted area for current participants, and a restricted area for office administrators. Some of the work in this task repeats on an annual basis, e.g., accepting applications for scholarships and travel requests from participants for summer laboratory residencies. In other cases, contract staff must react quickly to post late-breaking news of interest or deploy new database systems to collect and/or disseminate information. A major effort of this task will be the continued redesign of the existing site to improve its appearance and ease of use. Based on a preliminary design of the new home page, revisions and implementation throughout the site will be needed.

(3) Enhance and Maintain the Management Information System for the Loan Repayment Programs (LRP-MIS). The purpose of this task is to maintain the LRP-MIS and extend its functionality to the administration of extramural loan repayment programs through developing and deploying independent versions of the existing system for these programs, e.g., for the Contraception and Infertility Research Loan Repayment Program, the CIR-LRP was developed.

The LRPs are complex programs and the MIS is a relatively new system, there are numerous areas in which improvements as well as enhancements are needed. Some of these will add additional flexibility to the system, such as allowing administrators to set the renewal data for a contract at a future time, and providing the ability to smoothly process reimbursements sent directly from NIH to lenders. Others will add functionality, such as a group of improvements needed for payment projections. Payment projections are shown to participants, so accuracy is important. However, the present system does not automatically update projections when a participant's payment obligation is adjusted, when a new loan is added to the existing portfolio, or when new information about adjustable interest rates or loan balances is obtained.

The CIR-LRP includes the following differences from the existing LRP system:

- There is no participant obligation.
- There is no debt threshold or adjusted repayable debt.
- All participant payments are reimbursed.
- The initial contract period is always 2 years in length.

However, the CIR-LRP uses the same disbursement table as the current automated LRPs, and contains password-protected pages for use of the office administrators, participants, supervisors, and coordinators.

(4) Conference/Meeting/Program Planning and Support. Since its establishment, the Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarship has supported the research and research training programs of the NIH Intramural Program through participation in, or funding of, a variety of recruitment and outreach activities. The OLRS is expanding its initiatives in these areas and contractor support is required for the full range of logistics support. Services to be provided by the contractor include but are not limited to:

- Selecting sites and negotiating facility requirements
- Developing agendas and program formats
- Corresponding with speakers and participants
- Preparing programs and background materials
- Preparing promotional materials and registration forms
- Distributing agenda, background materials, etc.
- Providing for on-site registration and facility coordination
- Tracking and monitoring registration and attendance
- Arranging for participant travel/accommodations as necessary
- Coordinating food services and on-site copying, word processing, etc
- Coordinating physical arrangements and schedule for exhibits
- Assisting in the management of exhibits
- Arranging for and monitoring audio-visual support
- Design and formatting of publications and other materials
- Graphics design
- Desktop publishing
- Providing camera ready copy and art
- Selecting paper stock and ink
- Providing liaison with printers and other vendors
- Preparing posters, slides, and other visual aids

- Arranging for reasonable accommodations
- Preparing, editing, and producing transcripts, proceedings and meeting summaries
- Copying and preparation of multiple copies of documents, publications, etc.
- Preparing thank you letters for participants/speakers/panelists

(5) Assessment of the Effectiveness of OLRS Communications. The OLRS uses various media to communicate and disseminate information about its mission, programs and activities. Such media include Websites, brochures, flyers, exhibits, publications, etc. The OLRS requires a contractor to perform an assessment of the communication effectiveness of current hard copy and electronic materials used by the OLRS. The contractor will be responsible for planning, developing, testing, and evaluating all products used by the OLRS in communications and information dissemination. The contractor will provide the OLRS with a proposed process and estimated level of effort in carrying out the assessment. The contractor will keep the Director, OLRS, updated on the status of activities and apprised of significant findings. At the conclusion of the assessment, the contractor will provide a written summary of all activities associated with this effort, including all relevant qualitative and quantitative results. If warranted, the contractor will provide recommendations and a plan of action for improving the effectiveness of OLRS communications and information media.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Provision of Materials

OLRS will provide the contractor with hard copy and electronic files of existing, or newly developed materials, as well as instructions and direction related to the requirements described above. OLRS will provide a deliverables schedule.

The contractor will have access to confidential information contained in online applications and LRP financial information and must sign a nondisclosure agreement and make all efforts to protect the confidentiality of this information.

Reporting Requirements and Deliverables

Final inspection and acceptance of all work performed, reports, and other deliverables will be performed at the place of delivery and in accordance with the schedule specified by the OLRS Director. Acceptance or rejection of deliverables will be conveyed to the Project Manager by the OLRS Director.

Monthly status reports listing the tasks performed will be submitted to the OLRS Director within ten days after the end of each month. Itemized invoices will be submitted to the OLRS Director for approval and payment submission.

G. EVALUATION FACTORS

- (1) The contractor must demonstrate an understanding of the mission and programs of the OLRS, its needs in information dissemination, program administration, recruitment and outreach, and its effectiveness in meeting these needs; and an understanding of the goals and tasks required in this contract, including identification of what problems/issues may be encountered in performing the required tasks. **15 Points**
- (2) The technical approach should be described in sufficient detail to demonstrate soundness, feasibility, and completeness. The proposal should fully address the aspects of performing each requirement, including a work plan, project schedules, milestones, and deliverables. **30 Points**
- (3) The contractor's proposed personnel will be evaluated on the qualifications, expertise, and demonstrated experience necessary to plan and carry out required tasks. Staff must have expertise and demonstrated ability to plan, manage, and execute communications and information dissemination activities related to research and research training – preferably at NIH; to plan, develop, and maintain complex information management systems and Websites related to the administration and management of specialized programs associated with research training, recruitment and outreach, and Federal loan repayment programs; and access to specialized talent such as graphics designers, exhibit specialists, marketing specialists and communications analysts. Proposal should include resumes, curricula vitae and/or other appropriate information. **35 Points**
- (4) The contractor's corporate management capability and facilities will be evaluated on the adequacy of the proposed management plan; quality control procedures to assure project goals and milestones are met in a timely manner; adequacy of corporate experience in managing projects of similar size, content and scope; and the availability and adequacy of required equipment and facilities necessary to complete the requirements described above. **20 Points**

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PART II - CONTRACTOR'S REPLY:

TO # _____ CONTRACT #263-01-D-0_____ Contractor:

Points of Contact:

Phone-

Fax-

Address:

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:

Pricing Method:

TOTAL ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOURS:

PROPOSED COMPLETION DATE:

FOR THE CONTRACTOR: _____

Signature

Date

SOURCE SELECTION:

WE HAVE REVIEWED ALL SUBMITTED PROPOSALS HAVE DETERMINED THIS FIRM SUBMITTED THE BEST OVERALL PROPOSAL AND THE PRICE/COST IS REASONABLE.

Billing Reference # _____

Appropriations Data: _____

(ATTACH OBLIGATING DOCUMENT IF AN ROC WILL NOT BE USED.)

RECOMMENDED: _____

FAX #

Signature - Project Officer

Date

APPROVED: _____

FAX #

Signature - Contracting Officer

Date

NIH APPROVAL -

CONTRACTOR SHALL NOT EXCEED THE TASK ORDER AMOUNT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF THE CONTRACTING OFFICER & ICS COORDINATOR

APPROVED: _____

Signature -Anthony M. Revenis, J.D., NIH-ICS Coordinator

Date